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**REMARKS BY
U.S. AMBASSADOR TO BANGLADESH DAN MOZENA
DISASTER READINESS EXERCISE AND EXCHANGE
CLOSING CEREMONY**

**LAKESHORE HOTEL, DHAKA
SEPTEMBER 20, 2012**

General Wadud

High Commissioner Wilcox and Deputy High Commissioner Bolotnikoff

Min of Disaster Mgt??

When it comes to disaster preparedness, no one can match Bangladesh.

The people of Bangladesh, the government of Bangladesh, the civil society of Bangladesh ... all know how to handle and cope with cyclones, floods and tidal surges ... and, as a result, death tolls from these natural calamities have plummeted in recent years. Bangladesh rightly is most proud of this track record, and has so much to teach the world on how to respond to such disasters.

But Bangladesh, like many other countries around the world, has a major vulnerability: earthquakes. If anything keeps me awake at night, it is concern about the devastation that a major earthquake would cause in Bangladesh, most especially in Dhaka. Recently, I read an assessment by an agency of the Bangladesh government that if a 7.0 magnitude earthquake were to hit Dhaka, more than 70,000 buildings would come down ... that is an eventuality too horrific to contemplate.

But contemplate it we must. Handwringing and lamenting save no lives. Preparation does ...

... preparation, preparation, preparation that is what we and our Bangladeshis partners have been doing over the past four days through a joint US-Bangladesh planning exercise called the Disaster Readiness Exercise and Exchange ... DREE for short.

This exercise has been most comprehensive, involving personnel from both nations' militaries as well as representatives from the Ministry of Disaster Management, the Ministries of Health and Home Affairs, the Disaster Management Bureau, the Fire Service and Civil Defense Directorate, the Police Department, Dhaka City Corporation, the U.S. Embassy, the Oregon

National Guard, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and representatives from several foreign missions.

What an exercise!!

I have participated in various different exercises over my 31 year career, but never have I seen one so comprehensive, so in-depth, so real as this one. Experts introduced best practices and lessons learned from experiences with earthquake disasters around the world. This expertise was shared and tested, through a combination of table top exercises and city-wide field training exercises. I witnessed both of these exercise elements and was greatly impressed.

This exercise placed special emphasis on validating Bangladesh's Standing Order on Disasters. Bangladeshi and American participants worked side-by-side to exercise this document to ascertain whether the Standing Order provides the needed framework for effective rescue, recovery and rehabilitation responses to a major earthquake disaster.

Exercise participants are still assessing the results of the exercise, so I do not yet know how well the Standing Order measured up to the task of enabling an effective response to an earthquake disaster, but I do know that thanks to this comprehensive earthquake disaster exercise, Bangladesh will be able to assess and verify the document's strengths and shortcomings. Bangladesh will then be able to modify the Standing Order to make it a better plan for responding to an earthquake disaster.

We and our Bangladesh counterparts are already looking forward to next year's earthquake response exercise so we can assess how the revised Standing Order performs when put to a rigorous test. That exercise will focus especially on field applications of emergency management, particularly on how to strengthen the capacity of first responders.

I am proud that America is Bangladesh's partner in thinking about the unthinkable, in honing and improving Bangladesh's capacity to respond to an earthquake disaster. As Bangladesh has already demonstrated in the context of cyclones and floods, planning and preparedness save lives. Thanks to the Disaster Readiness Exercise and Exchange, which we are now closing, Bangladesh is further building its capacity to respond to an earthquake disaster.

I am pleased that the strong partnership between America and Bangladesh is contributing in such a meaningful way to Bangladesh's earthquake response capability.

Thank you.

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